GUIDE TO THE SQ18 YANOAMA FILE

[The name Yanoáma is an ethnolinguistic designation for a number of small groups of Indians living in southern Venezuela and northern Brazil, and does not refer to a nation or a people in the political sense. The Yanoáma include the Sanema (Guaharibo), Nabudub, Pubmatari, Taclaudub, Waica, Casapare (Shiriana), Karime, Samatari, Surara, and Pakidai. These subdivisions are not unified by socio-political authority but rather by a general and culture type, which in turn is integrated by a series of subcultures and cultural variants within the various subgroups. These groups occupy a coherent territory, speak more or less closely related languages and display essentially similar economic, sociological, and religious cultural forms. The Yanoáma are located in southern Venezuela and northern Brazil between 0^{o} 30' - 5^{o} North latitude and 62^{o} - 65^{o} 30' West longitude.

The Yanoáma language is basically an isolated linguistic stock, consisting of at least four languages and several dialects. Migliazza designates the four major languages of the Yanoáma family as: Yanomamɨ, spoken in the west-southwest; Yanomam in the east-southeast; Yanam in the northeast; and Sanɨma in the north (Migliazza, 1972, p. 34). According to the glottochronological analysis made by Layrisse et al, the Yanoáma linguistic stock ranges from 6-35 minimum centuries of internal separation. The two most clearly distinguishable families of the stock are: (1) Sanema, consisting of the Sanema, Nabudib, and Pubmatari, of 6-17 minimum centuries of internal divergencies, and (2) the Casapare, consisting of the Casapare, Carime (?), Waica, Samatari, Surara, and Pakidai, of 8-21 minimum centuries of internal divergencies (5: Layrisse et al, p. 80).

The Yanoáma are probably one of the largest, yet unacculturated aboriginal groups in South America, with a total population estimate of around 12,000 people distributed in over 200 villages. This would give an average of 60 people per village, yet as Migliazza points out in the central villages and those engaging in warfare, the population may reach as high as 200 in one village (Migliazza, 1972, p. 16). On the periphery of the Yanoáma area, the average per village is well below 50.

Subsistence is based on slash and burn agriculture with the predominant cultigen being a variety of plantains and bananas. Other crops grown are bitter and sweet manioc, taro, yams, and sweet potatoes. A form of arboriculture is also practiced, the tree grown being the peach palm whose fruit is of primary importance to the diet during certain times of the year. Hunting and collecting further supplement subsistence needs. Fishing is of minor importance to the economy.

The Yanoáma permanent settlements consisted of a circle of huts around a central plaza. The huts stand so close to one another that adjacent roofs overlap, giving the impression that a circular roof existed interrupted only by the diametrically opposed entrances to the settlement (Wilbert, 1972, p. 32). Each hut by itself was little more than a large windscreen on four poles, the front poles which are about twenty-one feet high slanting down in the rear to about three feet. The side facing the plaza is left open while the exterior wall is closed with poles wedged against the roof. The roof is made of a thick matting of palm leaves which are fastened to a framework of poles and lianas. The permanent villages are often surrounded by a palisade fence. The village is the basic socio-political unit of the Yanoáma and is composed of several

extended families with nuclear family households (5: Layrisse et al, p. 81). The founding nucleus of such a village consists of two intermarried pairs of brothers and (consanguineally with them unrelated) sisters and thier descendants. The two resulting lineages exchange their women, thus bringing about a web of affinal relationships. Every village has its own headman, and one pata, "big-old," was usually more influencial than the others. Migliazza claims that the position of chief or headman is not really inherited but was more dependent on having many living agnatic relatives and the ability to assert oneself among them (Migliazza, 1972, p. 415), yet there is some indication that at one time, at least, the office was inherited patrilineally from father to son, or from elder brother to younger brother. If there is no suitable successor to the office the old chief could choose a capable man outside of the dominant lineages. In addition to the regular village chief, during times of war, a man was often chosen with experience in combat to act as war chief. This latter office was not hereditary and became inactive when hostilities ceased. As additional lineage groups joined the village community and intermarried with members of the original lineages, political pressures and internal factionalism frequently led to the splitting apart of the village and the establishment of a completely new community.

Marriages are usually arranged by the male relatives of the girl, although there have been cases where the man would make his own choice of a bride and talk to her parents about the wedding arrangements. Brother-sister exchanges and cross-cousin marriages are the preferred pattern. Bride service is common among the Yanoáma. Residence is first with the girl's parents and later with the husband's family or wherever the husband chooses. There is no general marriage ceremony to all the Yanoáma. Polygyny is widespread.

All Yanoáma groups as well as their Carib neighbors have a kinship terminology of a bifurcate merging type (e.g., Ego calls his father's brother "father" and his mother's sister "mother"). A different term is used by Ego for his "uncles" and "aunts" of a different sex than that of his mother or father. In Ego's generation the terminology is of the Iroquois type in which parallel cousins are called "brothers" and "sisters" and thus differentiated from cross-cousins. Patrilineal descent and agnatic relationships are considered more important than matrilineal relatives, a fact not uncommon in the Iroquois kinship system (Migliazza, 1972, pp. 414-415).

Shamanism is well developed in the society with the shaman establishing contact with the spirits (hekira) through the use of hallucinogenic drugs. The chief function of the shaman is in the supernatural curing of the sick. All men can become shamans if they wish, requiring only some relatively simple but formal training under the tutelage of an older shaman; however, only a few men in each village actually choose to do so. The Yanoáma have a well developed cosmology and mythology with the primary cultural heroes Omam, his brother Yoao and their enemy Pore playing a major part in many of the tales and stories. A whole host of spirits and ghosts also play a part in their religious activities.

The SQ18 Yanoáma file consists of eleven sources, five in English (sources 5, 6, 9, 10, and 11), three are translations from the German (sources 1, 2, and 3), and three from the Spanish (sources 4, 7, and 8). Probably the most useful sources for a general background on the Yanoáma are 5: Layrisse et al, which contains a five page cultural summary on the Yanoáma as a whole, supplemented with the more detailed information presented in 10: Chagnon and 11:

Chagnon. The remaining sources in the file are related to specific Yanoáma subgroups. 1: Schuster, written by a professional anthropologist, is a sociological analysis of inter- and intra- community relationships among the Waica. Source 2: Becher, also written by a professional anthropologist, provides excellent ethnographic information on the material culture, religion, and political structure of the Surara and Pakidai subgroups, but is somewhat weak on social organization and kinship. 3: Rodrigues, written by a linguist, is a brief account of the historical and linguistic background of the Yanoáma language as spoken by the present day Surara and Pakidai. 4: Wilbert provides a good general background coverage on Sanema ethnography with additional data on other Yanoáma subgroups. Wilbert is a well known anthropologist with a specialized interest in South American ethnography. 5: Layrisse et al, prepared by a team of physicians and professional anthropologists, is basically a blood group study of the Waica Indians, with comparative data provided on other "Paleo/Meso-Indian peoples," especially the Warao and Yaruro. 6: Vinci, written by a traveler/explorer, is a popularized account of the author's travels among the Sanema subgroup of Yanoáma, as well as the Makiritare Indians (SS20) of southern Venezuela. Some general cultural information on both groups will be found here. 7 and 8: Barker, written by an American Protestant missionary, provide a short but precise ethnographic descriptions of the Waica, with special elaboration in 8: Barker on the warfare aspect. 9: Grelier, by a geographer, presents a popularized account of the author's trip to discover the source of the Orinoco River and his incidental observations on the various Indian groups with whom he came in contact during his expedition, here notably the Guaharibo (Sanema) and Waica, and the Makiritare (SS20). As noted previously, sources 10: Chagnon and 11: Chagnon provide a more general ethnography on the Yanoáma as a whole, with special emphasis in 10: Chagnon on warfare, social organization, and marriage alliances and in 11: Chagnon on warfare, interpersonal relations, and intercommunity relationships. All sources

except 3: Rodrigues, which was based entirely on secondary source material, were written from the primary field experiences of the authors. Sources 4: Wilbert and 10: Chagnon were further supplemented by the addition of documentary material to their primary data. All sources were based on data gathered in the period of 1950-1968.

The Yanoáma file is one of best available of any South American Indian group now a part of the HRAF file system, and well adapted to cross-cultural research. The file was processed between 1965-1972.]